Ad Noctem

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Ad Noctem

by AGlassRoseNeverFades

Summary

Various slices of life in the Lecter household after the events of *De Profundis*. Lots and lots of fluff ahead. Ye hath been warned.

**As of 03/15/2016, all prompts are now closed. Thanks for reading, and if you're one of my former prompters, thank you for participating!

Notes

scarletlotus says:

I have a prompt request: Abby says her first word while Hannibal is out hunting. Will calls Hannibal during the hunt . Thanks !

**Mano lobiai:* my treasures

Next up on my list, though not necessarily in this order: Christmas and the wedding ;D

See the end of the work for more notes

Abby's First Word

"Now this may hurt a bit," says Hannibal as he begins slicing into the grocer's cheek—the one on the same side as where the man had slapped his own son, in full view of several customers and staff, when the boy had been caught trying to shoplift from his father's store. While certainly such disruptive behavior in one's offspring should be curtailed, violence and abuse against a child, even an unruly teen such as that boy, must *never* be the answer. And the ugly act had been met with *applause* and murmurs of approval by many of the other witnesses no less, as though such a thing were perfectly acceptable as long as the victim were a sulky and troubled adolescent with dyed hair and a silver stud in his left nostril.

One sharp look from his mate after the incident took place, and Hannibal knew the grocer's fate was sealed. It was fortunate really that Will possessed enough self-restraint not to rip into the man then and there, as well as every fool that watched without batting an eye, else he may not have been able to go after the man himself like this. Such abuse was likely all too common at the home and the most likely cause of the boy's defiant behavior rather than the result of it, the Omega had said later as they were driving home, quietly fuming. His mate would be well pleased when Hannibal came home with much finer choice meats from the grocer than the man usually had on offer at his shop.

Hannibal is currently doing his butchering at the private farmstead he holds under a different name, preferring this space over his house when he has work he wishes particularly to drag out without risk of nosy neighbors overhearing. While a far more practical and larger space than the house in Baltimore, however, it is always difficult now to make the long drive away when he much prefers to be home with his fiancé and their precious daughter just upstairs. It is for this reason he often does not prolong his visits here more than necessary so he can hurry home, but he still remembers the venom that had been in Will's eyes as the echo of that slap had reverberated around the store, and knows that his Omega will not be satisfied if this man does not suffer thoroughly for his crimes.

He is just beginning the next incision—the pig under his knife currently still and silent but able to feel every cut quite acutely thanks to the paralytic agent coursing through his veins—when his phone buzzes lightly in his pocket. Murmuring a soft apology, he sets the scalpel aside on the operating table next to the man's leg and takes the call. He smiles at the sound of his mate's voice, oddly excitable for this time of the morning as he greets him.

"Are you terribly busy at the moment?" Will asks, sounding as if he is putting forth great effort to restrain himself from simply blurting out whatever he had called to say.

"Not at all. Mr. Avery and I here have barely gotten started yet." Though he cannot move his limbs, Mr. Avery's eyes widen ever so slightly, shining wetly with terror. "Did you need something from me, my darling?"

"It's Abby," Will says in a rush. *"She just said her first word!"* Hannibal clenches the edge of the table at this pronouncement, feeling a mixture of elation at this wonderful news and disappointment that he was not there to witness this moment. He brushes that latter aside—it

is irrational, as there will be plenty of other such moments, some of which he may be the one calling Will later to tell him all about.

"What word was it?" he asks in hushed voice, reverential. For most babies he knows it is usually some iteration of their parents' names, *'dada'* most commonly in English, but he harbors some small mischievous hope that all of the times he has pointed to Will's picture in secret and quietly but clearly pronounced *'Mama'* for Abigail's sake might be paying off at last. Though likely if that were the case, Will's excitement would be tinged with a wry hint of accusation as he pretends to be offended by what Hannibal has been teaching their daughter behind his back.

"Why don't you listen to her for yourself?" Will asks instead of answering, and then there is some rustling on the other end of the line as he presumably moves to kneel on the floor and bring the phone closer to their child playing on the carpet. *"Abby, tell Papa what you told Dada."*

Hannibal smiles as their daughter coos and babbles her usual string of nonsense sounds, but no actual words he can discern. It is possible Will simply heard what he wanted to in those noises earlier, but he doesn't say as much, not wishing to spoil the happy moment, and fairly confident besides that Will would certainly know the difference, spending almost every waking moment with their little girl as he does with all the enthusiasm and shining wonder of a new mother.

Will simply laughs, clearly not discouraged yet when Abigail doesn't immediately cooperate. *"Abby, who is this?"* he asks, and Hannibal knits his brows in confusion, uncertain who Will could be referring to when he can't see what the younger man is pointing out. *"Who is this, Abigail? Is this your kitty?"* Ah, that clarifies things—Abigail's favorite toy, that pink tentacled monstrosity that Beverly Katz had inexplicably called a *cat* when she first gave it to Will at the baby shower. Now Hannibal can paint a picture in his mind of Will holding that peculiar doll and waggling it in one hand, his phone held out in the other, outstretched to catch their daughter's response.

"Kiki!" the infant screams out delightedly. Hannibal's heart feels as though it has stilled and lodged somewhere in his throat. *"That's right, it's your kitty,"* Will reiterates, and the girl cries out again, *"Kiki, kiki!"*

"Mwah!" Will makes an exaggerated smacking sound with his lips—Hannibal can picture it as though he is there, Will pressing the cat's face against Abigail's cheek as though it is kissing her, as he has seen his Omega do many times before—and the girl dissolves into high-pitched squeals and giggles as she always does when Will plays this game with her, clapping her hands together with joy. Hannibal feels his smile grow a bit watery and wishes he were home right now.

"Okay, honey, here you go," Will says then, presumably giving the toy back to her as he straightens and stands. He chuckles into the phone. *"Not exactly the word either of us was expecting, I think,"* he says, speaking to Hannibal again. *"Then again, she adores that thing so much I guess I really shouldn't be surprised. I'll have to call Bev and tell her next. She'll go nuts and buy about a thousand more of them for her probably."*

Hannibal does not say anything, is in fact too overwhelmed to speak. Swallowing past the lump that has not quite dislodged itself from his throat yet, he swipes away the traces of tears that have begun to form at the corners of his eyes with his forefinger and thumb.

"Hannibal?" his mate asks concernedly.

"I am listening, my love," he answers at last, voice still a quiet rasp as he struggles to keep his emotions in check. Will *hmms* at him softly on the other end of the line but doesn't say anything else. He doesn't need to; they both know each other so well now that he can perfectly visualize the warm delicate smile that comes with that hum on his Omega's features, just as he's certain Will can tell just by the tone of his voice that he has been crying.

With a ragged sigh, Hannibal comes back to himself enough to clear his throat and jest, "Should I be worried? Between the two of you, I can all too easily imagine our home becoming overrun by stray cats now as well as dogs."

Will laughs lightly at that, then clears his throat and sounds almost guilty as he replies, *"Funny you should say that. You know, uh, Alana mentioned to me the other day that her neighbors' cat just had some kittens they were trying to get rid of..."*

"Will," Hannibal says bleakly, not having to put forth much effort to make his voice sound strained. "Please tell me you did not agree to adopt a kitten without at least consulting me first."

There is a pause, and then Will carefully answers, *"I did not agree to adopt a kitten without consulting you first."* Hannibal's mouth thins at the ever so precise language.

"How many?" he asks, resignation now relaxing his briefly tensed shoulders. This does not have to be a totally unmitigated disaster. He has always been more fond of cats than dogs anyway, even if he shudders internally at the thought of clawed furniture and all the *shedding*.

"We'll, uh, talk about that when you get home," Will responds. *"It'll be weeks and weeks before they're grown enough to be separated from their mom anyway, so..."*

Mr. Avery lets out a pained rattling moan and twitches his head ever so slightly, the paralytic just slowly beginning to wear off and starting at his upper extremities. "Darling, I am afraid I must go. Mr. Avery has been so patient to wait this long, but I must finish seeing to him now. We *will* be discussing this further when I get home," he adds, trying to inject some sternness into his tone though he knows it will be of no avail. He is utterly at the mercy of Will's whims, has been since even before Abigail was born, and both of them now know it. Will, cunning and clever creature that he is, knows exactly when and how to use it to his advantage. Such as now.

"We sure will, won't we, Abby?" Will says, and Hannibal can tell he is bending down again to pick up their daughter and hold her in the crook of his other arm. *"When Papa gets home, we're all gonna talk about getting real kitties to run around the house and play with, aren't we, baby?"*

"Kiki, kiki, KIKI!" Hannibal sighs again, thinking of how masterfully Will has already played him, using how firmly the Alpha is wrapped around that little girl's finger to further press his advantage. He wouldn't be wholly surprised if Will had immediately sensed the opportunity after hearing Abigail's first word and chosen to act upon it now with this very purpose in mind.

As if Hannibal Lecter needed more reasons to fall a little more in love with Will Graham each day.

"I will see you both soon, *mano lobiai."* With that last little goodbye, Hannibal hangs up and puts away his phone, a soft smile playing on his lips.

"You are in luck today, Mr. Avery," he says as he takes up his scalpel again. "I am in more of a hurry to finish this now than I was when we first began. Let's pick up now where we left off," he says, directing an entirely different sort of smile at the man on the table who does *not* know how to appreciate family the way Hannibal does. "Shall we?"

Abby's First Christmas

Chapter Notes

> Special thanks must go to HermaiaMoira for writing the amazing fic Kūčios. Without it, I would have never known such a beautiful holiday tradition existed, so thank you so much for the inspiration, friend!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Their first Christmas Eve together is a private, almost subdued affair, not at all like the gaudy flash and pomp Will had feared it might be. There is still a bit of strain between the two of them at times, Hannibal's past transgressions not easily forgotten in the short weeks since the Omega discovered them, but Will's anger is long gone and his hurt fades a little more each day. Eventually he will be able to forgive all of it, he knows, and in the meantime they have grown all the stronger as a family despite their previous missteps.

He remembers Christmases past with his father, drinking pre-packaged hot cocoa or eggnog in the living room in front of their little plastic tree while the likes of Bing Crosby and Judy Garland crooned the classics from an old stereo in the corner. Today, there is a real tree in the den with softly twinkling lights that little baby Abigail stares at as though hypnotized every time Will takes her in there. Today, Will sits at the island counter in the kitchen, shirt unbuttoned, cradling the newborn in his arms as she drinks from his right breast and watching with a bit of fond bemusement as his Alpha busies himself cleaning every square inch of the house, it seems.

Christmas Eve is almost more important than Christmas morning in Lithuanian tradition, or so Will has gathered from the way Hannibal throws himself into preparations for their evening dinner—*Kūčios,* the older man had called it.

The house must be thoroughly cleaned in advance and all the house linens changed, though Hannibal had pushed Will right back down onto his seat that morning when he had tried to stand to help, insistent that Will's only job today was to rest and spend time with Abigail. Since they brought her home from the hospital a little over a month ago, Will has been kept from doing anything deemed "too strenuous" by the Alpha, who claims even now that Will still needs time to recover after the "difficulties" involved with the birth. The most he will allow Will to do is make sure the dogs are fed and watered, and has even taken on the more unpleasant tasks himself like bathing the dogs when they need it—which has provided Will with *hours* of free entertainment on multiple occasions now—and making sure the kennel is also kept well-heated, clean, and orderly so the dogs won't get sick out there. It's all very sweet although a little frustrating at times, but no matter how many times Will protests that he's fine to do most tasks on his own, his mate insists upon doing things like this and personally waiting on him hand and foot until he's certain the Omega is fully recovered.

For this same reason, Hannibal has also insisted Will should eat and keeps pushing snacks in front of him all day even though he himself is fasting until dinner, as custom dictates. Will is welcome to take part as much as he wishes next year, the man promises, though he is under no obligation to do so since it is not a tradition he has grown up with as Hannibal has.

“I’m part of this family, aren’t I?” Will scoffs as soon as those words leave Hannibal’s mouth, immediately dismissive of even the possibility that he might not participate in a ritual that obviously matters this much to the Alpha.

Hannibal smiles softly. “It has been many years since I have observed this day myself,” he quietly admits. “I am not a religious man, and have often told myself this was the reason for it. In truth, I neglected the practice because I feared it would be too much to bear alone, with none but the dead to share it with.” He pauses in his movements, no longer speaking or wiping down the counter with the rag in his hand, clearly lost in thought. He only looks up when Will lays his own free hand gently atop his, smiling up at him as a silent reminder. *You’re not alone now.*

Hannibal bends down, turning his hand over to grasp Will’s and lift it up to his lips so he can brush a kiss across his knuckles. “I think that is enough cleaning for today. We should head upstairs to bathe and change our clothes, and then I will finish preparing dinner.” He has already done much of the cooking before thoroughly wiping down the kitchen, since none of the dishes could be served hot and would need time to cool anyway, and so only has a few finishing touches to add before everything will be ready.

Will holds Abigail up against his chest and thumps her lightly on the back to burp her. He has already given the infant her bath for today, and now that she has finished eating it won’t be long before she is ready to drop off for her nap anyway. Rising to head upstairs and lay her down in her crib, he turns back to Hannibal on the way out and asks, “Care to join me then?”

The look of surprise and cautious hope on Hannibal’s face is more than worth it. The two of them have not been intimate with each other since Abigail was brought home, ostensibly because there hasn’t been much opportunity between time spent taking care of their newborn and Will’s ongoing physical recovery, but also largely in part because of the silent understanding between them that the Alpha would need to work to earn that level of trust and intimacy back first.

Will is still not entirely certain the Alpha *has* earned it just yet, but *what the hell,* he thinks. It is Christmas, after all, and he’s tired of holding out when he misses that closeness and feels just as starved for touch as Hannibal does. So with a coy smirk and a wink, he turns back around and heads up the stairs, confident that the other man will follow along just as soon as he’s managed to scrape his jaw up off the floor.

*

One *very long* shower later, the two return to the kitchen looser limbed and refreshed, their hair still damp and easy smiles on their faces. Will bumps shoulders with the older man as he wordlessly begins to help without asking.

Together they lay straw over the whole table and spread the white tablecloth over that, then set out candles and the dishes themselves. Will had raised a single eyebrow earlier in the day as he watched Hannibal prepare and listened to the explanation of each item on the menu, surprised to learn the entire meal would be dairy-free and *meatless*. He'd considered making a dry quip about whether or not Hannibal was even capable of that latter but then thought better of it; something about the hushed, solemn tone with which Hannibal explained these traditions of his homeland made Will think this one day in particular would be a bad time to bring up cannibalism, joking or otherwise.

Hannibal brings out the plates and silverware to do the table settings next, and Will nearly does a double-take when he realizes just how many plates the man has brought out. Hannibal methodically begins laying out *five* table settings—the two at the head and direct right of that which are presumably his and Will's, plus three more along the left side which receive plates but no silverware and a small candle in the center of each.

"My father, my mother," Hannibal explains, indicating each chair as he speaks starting from the farthest down. "Mischa," he says more quietly as he points out the one closest to the head of the table, which upon closer inspection Will realizes has a small cushion placed in the seat, as if to help give a small child a boost up. Will swallows lightly and doesn't say anything.

The dead here tonight outnumber the living, he thinks without saying it aloud, and the place settings aren't even finished yet. Hannibal still holds two more plates in his hand, which he holds out to Will now almost awkwardly, as if uncertain whether or not this is the most appropriate thing to do. "I thought you might wish to place the rest," he admits as though offering a confession.

Will realizes two things at once as he meets Hannibal's gaze—one of the plates is meant for his own father, but the other is *not* meant for his mother, whom Will would not invite to dine at their table whether living or dead, even if he knew which it was. That leaves only one person that other plate could possibly be meant for.

"Perhaps I should not have presumed—"

"Give them to me," Will interrupts, and he is surprised at the rasp of his own voice as he says those words, at the blurred moisture he has to blink away from his eyes before he can see well enough to take them out of Hannibal's hands. He sets one down, then the other, and somehow manages to keep his hands steady enough to place the candles and light them with a match as Hannibal lights the ones on the other side.

Will steps back, staring at his own handiwork, unable to look away from the eerie flicker of the two flames directly in front of him. He blinks, and the chairs are suddenly no longer empty, filled instead by specters he would have never expected to see in the same vision otherwise—Ned Graham and Abigail Hobbs sitting beside one another, both of them looking up at Will with proud, contented smiles on their faces. Blurred images he can't quite make out in his periphery seem to occupy the seats on the other side as well, but Will is too afraid of shattering the illusion to risk looking away to try to see them better. For a few seconds, he forgets to breathe.

He blinks again when his vision starts to blur, eyes watery again, and the images are gone. He also becomes aware in that moment of Hannibal beside him now, holding him up as though fearing he might fall. "*Mylimasis, ar tau viskas gerai?"* Will wonders what sort of expression must have come over his own face for Hannibal to be shaken enough to forget his English, but the context of the question is clear enough.

Smiling reassuringly, Will looks up to answer, *yes, I'm fine,* but what comes out instead though with just as much quiet conviction is, "I forgive you."

Hannibal swallows, his grip tightening minutely around Will's shoulders for just a moment. Then he gives a thin, watery smile, and kissing the top of Will's head, says, "The first stars are just starting to come out. It is time to begin." With that, he leaves the room and goes to retrieve their daughter. Will listens to him murmuring more gentle Lithuanian to the fussing, sleepy girl upstairs on the baby monitor on the sideboard while he sets up the little travel crib between both their chairs so she can go back to sleep if she wants. He deliberately does not look back at the table behind him again.

*

Before they officially start their meal, Hannibal takes up one of the thin unleavened wafers on the tiny plate in front of them and offers it to Will. The delicately imprinted image of Madonna and Child is almost too lovely to break off and eat, but do it they must.

"God grant that we are all together again next year," Hannibal intones softly, and then together the two of them finally begin.

Chapter End Notes

~~That's the second time in a row now Hannibal's gotten all teary-eyed, whew, I'm on a roll here!~~ So, were the ghosts real, or was it simply another case of Will's special empathy hallucination magic at play? You decide!

Season's tidings, everyone!

Before the Wedding

Chapter Notes

Gahhhh, everything regarding the wedding was originally going to be only one chapter, but I realized about halfway through that this is way longer than I intended already and I desperately want to post *something* now, if only because going too long between updates makes my eye twitch something fierce. So here, have all the build-up to the wedding but not the actual wedding *itself* until the next update. :P

Who knows, if I finish that part quickly enough I may even be able to knock out a Very Special Valentines Day episode on time as well instead of, y'know, sometime late February/early March-ish. **hysterical disbelieving laughter ensues** What, a guy can dream, can't he??

See the end of the chapter for more notes

To say that Will has been skeptical about this whole “wedding” idea from the start would be a bit of an understatement. It has nothing to do with wanting to be married—this is a symbolic step forward in their lives and a sign to others that the bond their family has forged together is an unbreakable one. He gets that part just fine, he just doesn’t understand why people expect him to make such a big *to-do* about it.

If it were up to just him, they would have already gotten this over with in a courthouse with no one but the judge and county clerk to witness months ago. It had been with gentle coaxing that Hannibal had convinced him, reminding the Omega that a wedding is as much for the family and friends who attend as it is for the betrothed themselves, and friends Will and Hannibal both have—few perhaps, but enough that Will had relented. If only because he knew Beverly would likely skin him and hang his hide above the fake mantelpiece in her living room if he ran off and eloped without telling her.

Will relented, on the condition that Hannibal would be the one to take care of everything and leave him the hell out of it. “I’m serious, if you try to rope me into this,” he’d said later that evening after putting their fourteen-month-old to bed—seeing all too clearly in his mind’s eye a dazzling, horrifying vision of Hannibal walking up with near-identical swatches of colored cloth or flowers or some other such frivolous thing, insistent that it be of the utmost imperative that Will help him choose the “correct” one—“if you ask me one inane question about...about seating charts, or whatever, so help me god, I’m calling the whole thing off right then and there.”

Hannibal had batted not an eyelash, merely smiled in that enigmatic way of his that always has Will’s eyes narrowing in suspicion. “You’ve already been planning the whole thing without me, haven’t you?” Will had asked then dryly.

“I rather suspected the additional stress of planning a wedding was not something you would wish to take on, so I took the liberty of making all the arrangements earlier this month,” he’d admitted casually. It was January. Will’s mind boggled. Hannibal must have gotten *everything* done shortly after the holidays ended, and all without his mate noticing, most likely from the comfort of his office. He thought of the longer hours his Alpha had put in those first couple of weeks, citing his patients’ heftier needs since some of them would still be recovering from their ‘holiday blues,’ and realized with some fond exasperation how easy it must have been for Hannibal to slip in time for this as well, knowing Will wouldn’t be any the wiser.

“All you need to do is be dressed and ready to go by one o’clock on April the fourth,” the Alpha informed him with a hint of smugness. Will blinked, fishing his phone out of his pocket to check his calendar.

“Why the fourth? Isn’t that a Monday?”

“While it is more conventional to hold such a ceremony over the weekend, the date is something I would not budge on.” He’d smiled at Will’s perplexed look, not in the least perturbed to see that the significance of it was lost on him. They hadn’t really been in the practice of celebrating anniversaries up to this point. “It will be three years to the day since I first saw you in Jack Crawford’s office, a memory I knew even then I would always treasure.”

Will rolled his eyes, but it was partially offset by the embarrassed hand he raked through his curls and pleased flush to his cheeks. “I didn’t particularly like you back then.”

“No, you did not,” Hannibal agreed, smiling as though recollecting a particularly fond memory as he thought of Will’s gruff demeanor and irked expression at Hannibal’s analytical ambush of him. “I, on the hand, already liked you immensely.” After a pause, he added, “It’s actually rather fortunate the fourth is on a weekday. There was little difficulty in booking the venue despite the short notice.”

“And what venue would that be?” Will asked, half-wary it would be somewhere ridiculous and truly ostentatious like the opera house or…or…hell, who even knew considering his mate’s connections and tastes.

“That’s a secret, my dear,” Hannibal told him with a wink. “I wouldn’t wish to spoil any part of the surprise too early.”

Will gaped, caught off-guard for the moment, then sputtered, “Wha—you’re seriously not telling me *anything?* Not even *where* we’re supposed to be getting hitched?”

“You’ve chosen not to be involved in any part of the planning process, remember?”

“Oh, I see. So this is a punishment then.”

“Not at all,” Hannibal said, though the smirk on his face said he was taking far too much sadistic glee in torturing Will this way. He stepped closer then and reached out to tuck a stray curl behind Will’s ear, smiling down at him far more gently as his fingers trailed lower to rest

against his Omega's cheek. "You're looking to the future as though our wedding were some horrible burden to endure and get out of the way as quickly as possible."

Will looked away almost guiltily and tried to pull back at those words, but Hannibal wouldn't let him, tilting Will's chin upward and dropping a chaste kiss to his lips as if to soothe away the tired pout resting there. "Don't you know I want only to see your smile, *mylimasis?* This is an important moment in both our lives. I only wish to make it as special a day as it was meant to be."

Will huffed, an embarrassed flush to his cheeks. "You do know you've won already, right? I'm marrying you. There's no need for you to try to turn this into some fairy tale fantasy in order to sweep me off my feet," he told him with a roll of his eyes.

He'd yelped when Hannibal unexpectedly did literally just that, scooping him up as though he weighed nothing and carrying him in his powerful arms. "My dear, there is *every* need for it."

One never knew how long an intimate moment could last when there was a sleeping child in the other room, so Hannibal took full advantage the rest of that evening for as long as he could.

*

"Seriously, Graham, you're living the dream of every Omega and at least half the Betas out there in the world, so quit your griping," said Beverly as the four of them—Will, Bev, Jimmy, and Zee—were wrapping up reports and sorting through files on a particularly slow day in the archives. Or rather, were goofing off under the guise of writing reports and sorting files. It's a rare day when Jack is deposed in court for an entire afternoon, and as Jimmy had eloquently explained to Will when the Omega had made the foolish mistake of actually trying to *work* like they were supposed to, "When Big Daddy Crawford is away, his kiddies break out the Schnapps and play."

Will wasn't even going to begin trying to unravel the psychological quagmire that was the entire science team behaving every bit like the handful of unruly children Jack and Bella Crawford never had, particularly not after having already accepted the liberal splash of Jack Daniels that had been poured into his thermos from Jimmy's hip flask in a corner of the room where the archive cameras couldn't see. "I thought the dream was supposed to be planning out every absurd, minute detail of the whole affair, not having an Alpha who does it for you," he said, fiddling idly with a rubber band stretched out between his fingertips.

"That's the unfortunate reality, Will, not the *dream,"* Beverly persisted. "Okay, look, you're half-right. We've all been trained by Disney since birth that your wedding is supposed to be this perfect magical day where you turn into a glittery pink princess and all the little woodland creatures sing while bluebirds tie ribbons in your hair or some shit like that, right?"

"Uh, my favorite Disney movie's a tie between Fox and the Hound or Lady and the Tramp."

"Of course it is," said Jimmy in a tone that conveyed an utter lack of surprise.

“Really? Cuz I would’ve thought it was 101 Dalmatians,” Zee piped up. “Y’know, on account of that being how many dogs you’re aspiring to ‘acquire’ one day for yourself. *Ow!”* He shook his stinging fingers and sucked them into his mouth, balefully eyeing the discarded rubber band Will had fired in his direction.

“Nice shot!” Jimmy praised, giggling.

“That’s for implying any of my dogs are stolen,” Will sniffed, mentally noting as he took another swig of his sort-of-Irish coffee that he *might* be just a tad drunk at this point and it wasn’t even three o’clock yet. His friends were terrible influences. Oh well, not like he gets to drink too often these days with a baby at home and all. “They’re all rescues, I’ll have you know.”

“Anyway,” Bev interjected, speaking over Zee who muttered something that sounded a bit like *‘sure they are.’* “Back to the topic at hand,” she said. “The point is, everybody gets so wrapped up in this idea of having ‘the perfect wedding’ they kinda miss where the magic’s really at. Take Beauty and the Beast for example. Do you even remember the part where Beau’s going over his options of what to wear with the talking wardrobe, or does your mind jump straight to the part where he’s already there in his gold chiffon-and-taffeta robes and the look on his face when Beast shows him this big beautiful ballroom he got all decked out just for their evening together?”

“I’m not wearing chiffon. Or taffeta. Or robes for that matter,” Will said, pulling a wry face. A plain tux would suit him just fine, thanks. This wasn’t the 1700s for crying out loud. There was some snickering from Zeller though that suggested he was trying to picture it anyway. Will deliberated the pros and cons of slinging more office supplies at him, but ultimately decided against it. For now.

“Ugh. I’m either too drunk to explain this right or you’re too drunk to understand what I mean,” Beverly complained. “What I’m trying to say is if your Alpha wants to take out all the fussing over every ‘absurd, minute detail’ as you say and leave you with nothing but that good, jaw-dropping, awestruck feeling, *that’s fucking awesome.* It’s kinda romantic and sweet actually.”

There were no pointed, curious side-eyes behind her as there might have been if this conversation had happened sometime last year. Bev and the guys split up amicably almost eight months ago and were back to being just friends. None of them really explained why, but Will suspected Zeller and Price were actually still dating in secret and that Bev had bowed out gracefully upon realizing the intimacy growing between them ran deeper than her own feelings. Now she was dating a guy named Saul who went to culinary school and no one else for the moment, though he was fine with keeping it an open relationship.

“But—”

“No, no buts, Graham!” she said. “Come on, you trust him to know what he’s doing, right? I’d hazard a guess and say he knows a lot more about this kind of stuff than you do.”

“Gee, thanks,” he replied, though he didn’t refute her argument. “That’s not the problem. I just hate the idea of walking into something like this blind! I’d like at least a hint to tell me

what I should expect." That was all he had been asking for to spark this conversation in the first place, after receiving a cheeky comment from Beverly asking him to thank Hannibal for sending out the invitations. No one would *show* him said invitation, nor give him so much as a clue about what it said except for a single line which apparently stated simply that Will was to be told nothing about its contents, under pain of the informant being summarily disinvited from the event altogether. Apparently no one was willing to take that risk. Even *Zee* hadn't cracked under the pressure, and Will's subsequent grumbling on being kept in the dark regarding *his own wedding* had led to Bev's weird, alcohol-fueled, Disney-obsessed lecture.

"I'll give you *one* hint," Beverly told him. "It's gonna be tasteful and classy and not at all like the crazy dog-and-pony show I know you're dreading. I'm like ninety percent sure there's not gonna be any live doves or giant melting ice sculptures of your face, so you can relax." At Will's wry, half-guilty grin, she added, "Come on, if *I* know you well enough to guess what you'd like and what'd send you running for the hills like a madman, I guarantee he does too. Have a little faith in your man there, Graham cracker."

"God, whose friend even are you, Bev?" he asked, the smile still on his face belying any hurtful intent. "Fine, I give up! You win. I'll stop trying to figure out what's going on and just...relax," he said as though the last word pained him.

"That's the spirit! Let's drink to it!" she crowed, clacking their thermoses together to seal it. Will chuckled and went along with it, taking another huge swig of his spiked coffee alongside her. He could only hope Beverly's predictions would hold true.

*

April 4th, 12:15 p.m.

Will sighed, running fingers through his still-damp hair. In a few minutes Hannibal would be done feeding Abby her oatmeal and would bring her upstairs to change her into her dress. He ran a hand down his bare chest and stomach, now smooth and flat as they once had been before his pregnancy, save for the puckered scar that ran across his belly like a jagged smile.

It irked him to realize he was starting to get anxious as the minutes crept by. He'd killed men in cold blood with hardly a rise to his heartbeat, had the scars to prove he'd been through worse ordeals and more, yet here he was experiencing nerves now because in less than an hour's time, he'd be climbing into the passenger seat of the Bentley and heading who knows where to say his vows and tie himself irrevocably in the last way he hadn't done yet to the father of his child. It was silly, he knew, but he couldn't help it.

He gazed down at the tuxedo spread out on the bedspread before him. His one act of "participation" in the planning had been agreeing to go with Hannibal to get fitted for it. He was so glad they weren't going along with those silly superstitions that said the groom couldn't see the bride or even what he was wearing before the wedding. Although, how peculiar was it to think that while tomorrow he would be Hannibal's husband, today he was Hannibal's *bride,* an antiquated hanger-on in the English language from the days when a male Omega would have been expected to wear dresses or robes with frills and take up duties as "mistress" of the household, and how stranger still that the word didn't stick in his craw the way something like that normally would.

He heard carefully measured steps, deliberately weighted so as not to surprise, before strong familiar arms wrapped around his bare torso, one thumb just barely skirting along the hem of his boxers. “You still are not dressed,” his Alpha murmured against his ear, his tone and manner clearly pleased rather than admonishing. “Good,” he went on, kissing lightly behind Will’s ear. “I would very much like to assist.”

“Careful you don’t ‘assist’ too much, or you’ll make these pants an uncomfortable fit,” Will said, only half-joking. He bit back a moan, already feeling himself begin to stiffen in his boxers as Hannibal ignored him and went on peppering kisses over the sensitive skin along his neck and collarbone. “Aren’t we on a bit of a time constraint here?” he asked, panting.

“We are. I suppose I shall have to be swift then,” the Alpha said, then immediately without warning dropped to his knees and yanked Will’s boxers down to his ankles. Before Will could even think to react or protest the abuse to the man’s neatly pressed trousers, his dick was engulfed by warm, wet heat and suction.

Will wobbled where he stood and made a shocked, strangled noise. Hannibal smoothly wrapped an arm around his waist, another around his knees, and transitioned Will to a sitting position on the bed, all without ever removing his mouth from the Omega’s sensitive member.

Will fell back, noting vaguely with a sliver of gratitude that the tux was far enough on the other side of the bed that only the sheets beneath him were rumpled as he squirmed and panted, hiding his louder cries and moans behind the back of his hand as his mate continued to bob his head up and down and suck him into the back of his throat. Will’s toes curled as he came after a particularly hard suck, just barely managing to muffle one last agonized groan in order not to disturb their baby presumably napping in her room.

Hannibal swallowed down every last drop and licked him clean before crawling up to join his lover on the bed, looming over his mate with a satisfied smirk on his lips. He pushed Will’s hand away when the Omega tried to reach out to brush it over the outline of his own erection through his slacks, instead holding both of Will’s hands captive by their wrists above his head.

“Not yet, my love,” he said, voice still husky, when the Omega whined at being denied the ability to touch him back. He leaned down, nose brushing against his mate’s lustrous curls, and whispered, “I will have you properly tonight, my bride, with your skin flushed dark and your back arched against a bed of rose petals and satin sheets.”

Will bit his lip and whimpered, imagining the scene painted by his Alpha’s words, musing idly that maybe *this* was why he didn’t have a problem with the word ‘bride,’ for how could he when his Alpha used it so sparingly, and just to decorate whispered promises like this one?

It wouldn’t even occur to him until they were already on the road and on their way, that the unexpected ambush by his mate’s teeth and tongue had left him loose-limbed and relaxed, as if his Alpha knew just what he needed to be calm and ready for the ceremony still to come.

*

Chapter End Notes

I decided on April 4th because that's when the first episode premiered in 2013. Ah, nostalgia.

And here, have a shoe-horned reference to Disney, complete with in-universe tweaks à la a/b/o dynamics, because why not. ~~And never mind my weird obsession with Beauty and the Beast, shhhh, not obsessed, certainly not obsessed enough to have watched it a thousand times and most definitely probably not obsessed enough to have written a Beauty and the Beast hannigram AU a million years ago, nope, don't know what you're talking about, don't go looking for it on my works page because it most definitely probably does not exist, shhhh.~~

The Wedding

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will can honestly say he is surprised, relieved, and also perhaps just the tiniest bit underwhelmed when the Bentley pulls to a stop in the parking lot of a rather ordinary-looking church. The grounds are well kept and there's an obvious charm to the place even from just looking at the outer façade, but it isn't quite what he expected. In all his half-worried imaginings, he never envisioned his mate opting for something so traditional.

Abby puts up surprisingly little fuss as he unbuckles her and gently takes her out of the car seat, waking her in the process. All she does is curl her little fingers tightly in the lapel of his jacket and rest her soft head against the crook of his neck. Will coos at her softly for being such a good girl and brushes a kiss to the top of her curls. He wonders if she'll continue to be this much of an angel throughout the ceremony, or if she's just saving an epic tantrum for right when they're in the middle of their vows. Now *that* would be memorable.

He takes in a quiet, awed breath once they step inside. What had been little more than rustically charming on the outside was more than beautiful enough to make up for it on the inside. The room is large, but not *too* large, the walls and pews both a rich, dark wood that makes it feel warm and welcoming, with tall floor-to-ceiling stained glass windows. There are real flowers and silk ribbons twined delicately around the pillars and front benches which he assumes are an added touch for the ceremony rather than a regular part of the décor. Nonetheless, he can understand perfectly now why Hannibal chose it. While it doesn't have the grandeur of the chapel in Palermo that makes up the foyer in his mate's mind palace, it is a gorgeous blend of both his and Will's preferred aesthetics.

It reminds him a little of some the nicer churches he's been to back in the South. He and his dad were never really religious, but occasionally whenever they moved to a new area, the sweet old ladies or town busybodies of those neighborhoods would stop by to welcome them with an invitation to some community potluck or barbecue that inevitably always seemed to take place out at the local church's backyard or inside its echoing concrete gym, and his dad was not one to turn down an opportunity to fill their bellies up for at least a day with good free food (and perhaps secretly hope that his shy son might actually make a friend or two amongst the local kids for once).

Will would just as inevitably find himself stealing away after awhile into the quiet, empty building when no one was looking, just to get away from all the people for a moment, and sit down in one of the back pews until his dad came looking for him. It is a collection of peaceful memories all blended together now into one unified experience in his own memory palace. He'd told Hannibal about it once, whether as a counterpoint to the Alpha's own admission that he collected stories about church roof collapses or as a peculiar way of saying that he understood the appeal, he wasn't sure. He had admitted that while what he believed was something closer to science fiction, he could understand why other people pinned their hope and faith in quiet, beautiful places like this.

He shifts his gaze to the other man now and realizes he is being watched, the faint smile on Hannibal's face telling him the man knows exactly where his thoughts have strayed. Abby, a little more awake now after their brisk walk from the car, sits up straighter in her mother's arms and points excitedly at the floor where shafts of refracted light from the stained glass windows splash against the pale carpet. "Dada, loo'!" she says. "C'lers!"

"Yeah, colors!" he agrees, turning his head again to beam proudly at the little girl in his arms. At almost eighteen months now, her babbling baby speech sounds have slowly been getting replaced with real words and loosely strung together sentence fragments. "The sunlight puts them there when it shines through those windows, see?" he explains, gesturing to divert her attention there.

That expression of wonder on her tiny face is one he loves to see every chance he can get. Not for the first time, he wonders how on earth he's going to get through two weeks without seeing it while he and Hannibal are on their honeymoon. Through lots and lots of Skyping, he imagines.

Hannibal steps closer to them both, enjoying the sight and mingled scents of his little family, Will knows, and drapes an arm over the one crossed behind Abby's back. It is just them in their own little world for the moment, three bright souls ensconced in this brief pocket of time. Will looks up and the smile he wears for Hannibal is a bit smaller and softer than the one he wears for Abigail, but no less warm and full of love.

"You're not in the least concerned the roof could cave in on us at any moment?" Will asks playfully, though he holds their daughter just a bit tighter against his chest almost unconsciously even as he jests.

"There are a great many things in this world which could end us at any moment, before we could ever lift our hands up in defense," Hannibal replies, still amused despite the serious nature of the topic, maybe even a little because of it. Their lives are steeped in so much death already that the two of them hardly even consider it morbid to hold conversations like this one, even around their little one. No one ever said their family would be a conventional one.

"However, I admit there is a certain irony about the roof collapsing on us now that would give our story almost a fittingly tragic end," the Alpha continues, looking up the roof with a thin smirk as if daring God to do it now.

Will scoffs and slugs his mate lightly on the shoulder. "I've waded through enough tragedy for one lifetime, thanks."

"It would also be pretty funny," Hannibal continues as though he hadn't heard. "Wouldn't it, *mano saldus vasaros vaikas?"* he asks, tickling Abigail's tummy to get her to giggle.

Others start to trickle in now as it gets closer to time, with Jack and Bella Crawford taking the lead. Will is honestly a bit surprised to see them here. He knows it's more difficult for Bella to leave the house these days, though she doesn't seem to be in much pain today and smiles radiantly at them as Jack pushes her wheelchair forward.

“I thought the groom wasn’t supposed to see the bride until the music starts,” Jack says jovially once they’re close enough that he can speak without raising his voice.

“You couldn’t keep me away from him if you tried, Jack,” Hannibal says, smiling down at his mate with an arm around his shoulders.

“No, I can see that,” Jack responds fondly. With his hands up as if in a mockery of self-defense he adds, “I admit, I had my misgivings when you two first got together, but obviously I was wrong.”

“Took you long enough to tell them that,” Bella interjects with a smirk.

“Oh hush, woman,” he chuckles. “Well, Will, what do you think of the place?” he asks, and there’s something about the question that makes Will wonder. He notices now that Bella and Jack both cast their eyes about the room with looks of familiarity and warm nostalgia.

“It’s lovely,” he answers. “Couldn’t have picked it better myself.”

“Nor I,” says Hannibal, which has Will turning back to look at him with a raised brow. “Jack is the one who suggested it to me when I mentioned I was looking.” Will interprets that to mean Hannibal casually nudged Jack to give his opinion without directly asking for it, with full intention of going with whichever option was suggested as long as it lived up to his own tastes.

“Bella and I got married here too,” Jack tells him, and the last piece clicks into place, confirming Will’s suspicion. Layers upon layers of subtle manipulation at work here that make it no surprise the Chesapeake Ripper has gone so long without being caught even without Will’s help. A thought crosses his mind that he’s considered more than once before, that his mate is capable of following multiple trains of thought at once without distraction from any, and this is part of what makes him so good at what he does.

His choice of venue for their wedding was out of genuine and heartfelt desire to exchange their vows somewhere beautiful, at a place he would be content to have taking up more space inside his memory palace, and it is also a means to tie Jack Crawford to them more strongly than ever, layering his subconscious feelings toward them with more positive and even familial associations than before, thus with each new association and shared moment between them making it all the more impossible for him to ever look at either of them with even the faintest passing suspicion.

What is family anyway, if not a gentle loving manipulation of one another? Jack himself had expressed it best, when he had once described family as a force that could encourage others to adopt certain values and attitudes. That may be a cynical point of view to have, Will muses, but he doesn’t mind it when he knows his mate’s reasoning is about more than just keeping their secret hidden—it is just as much a measure designed to hopefully eliminate the possibility of one day having to end the life of a valued friend.

(And it works. Decades from now, Jack Crawford will die peacefully in his sleep, firmly believing Hannibal Lecter to be one of the best men he has ever had the privilege to know, and without ever once suspecting he was the great white whale Jack had pursued for most of

his career. Some might call this a tragic ending to his story, but others would disagree, for he does not go gently into that good night all alone. He dies surrounded by dear friends who will feel the loss and shed real tears at his passing, and their three grown children who all unironically call him Grampa Jack.)

(The Crawfords will also both have a place set aside for them at the table every year on Kūčios. Will believes there is forgiveness in that.)

"And how's my other favorite girl in the whole wide world doing today?" Jack asks of the infant held at Will's hip, a wide grin splitting his features as Abby sucks her fingers into her mouth and ducks her head shyly against her mother's chest.

Will pokes her lightly in the side with his free hand. "You gonna answer him, honeybear?"

"Better yet," Jack says, leaning down enough to be eye level with her with his hands on his knees, "where's my hug, missy?"

Abigail peers up at him through her thick eyelashes and finally pulls her fingers out of her mouth, reaching out for him with both hands, one spit-slick and one dry.

"Now that's what I'm talking about!" he says, and Will passes her over to him. Jack bounces her in his arms to draw a delighted squeal from her before he settles her there against his chest. He seems not to mind at all when she bunches up the fabric of his jacket near the shoulder with her wet fingers. "Oh, you're starting to get heavier now, little lady," he chuckles. "Look how much you've grown already! I swear she gets bigger every time we see her, doesn't she, baby?"

"She certainly does," Bella agrees. "And that is a *very* pretty dress you are wearing, miss Abigail," she says, reaching up to rub the delicate lace at the hem between her fingers.

"Mrs. Crawford just paid you a compliment, Abigail," Hannibal says, leaning forward to meet his daughter's gaze with a smile. "What do you say?"

"Fank oo!" Bella gasps delightedly, both she and her husband looking on with proud, impressed smiles.

"My goodness, she learns so fast," Bella says. "You're welcome, Abigail."

"Will, you're not concerned about this little cutie stealing your thunder today?" Jack asks jokingly, referring to the snowy white hue of Abigail's dress.

Will looks down at his own very normal-looking black tuxedo, his hands in his pockets. "Well, *I* certainly wasn't going to wear white," he answers sardonically. That was one tradition he'd refused to cave into, having adamantly refused even when the tailor had suggested he at least go with "a nice shade of cream" if not full-white. "It would have been rather obviously disingenuous if I had anyway. I mean, considering the evidence," he says, gesturing with a nod at Abigail.

Jack lets out a loud belly laugh, and the little girl in his arms follows suit, giggling just as much as she had when her father was tickling her, clearly out of shared delight in Jack's good humor rather than any genuine understanding of what her mother just said.

The pastor steps out of his office to discuss last-minute arrangements with Hannibal, introducing himself to Will in the process and greeting the Crawfords as old familiar acquaintances. Will notices Bella and Jack exchanging a look as Hannibal excuses himself and steps aside with the man, one tinged with a bit of solemnity before Jack finally clears his throat and nods as though in response to some silent communication from his wife.

"I'll ask him when's a good time to call once he's done talking to Hannibal," Jack murmurs. As Hannibal finishes and starts walking back over to them, Jack gives Will a thin, almost wavery smile and hands Abigail back before walking up to the pastor, head slightly bowed as he speaks to the man in a hushed tone.

Hannibal watches him go curiously, and turns to Mrs. Crawford with a diffident look. With an equally thin but firmer smile and a quirked brow, she explains, "This is where Jack and I said our vows and swore to stand by each other, 'til death do us part. Seems only fitting this would be where he says his goodbyes to me." She watches her husband silently for a moment and then laughs once aloud. "I'm sorry," she says, turning her gaze to Will and Hannibal once again. "That's such a macabre thing for me to say, and on your special day no less."

"Not at all," says Hannibal, placing a hand atop hers. "It's natural to think about these things in times of celebration and shared joys. All life is short and fleeting. That is what makes it so precious in the now."

"To put it another way," Will adds, his tone dry, "weddings bring out the doomsayers in us all." It has the desired effect, startling her into laughter again and breaking the somberness of the moment.

Jack returns to wheel Bella to their seats on the front row. Abigail has begun to fuss and squirm from being held for so long, so Will gently sets her down on the floor and lets her stand on her own, her tiny hand engulfed in the palm of his. She has become quite the proficient walker over the last few months, and for that reason alone Will figures it's best to keep a hold of her hand for now rather than let her have the run of the place and risk having to crawl under the pews in their nice clothes to snag her again at five minutes 'til.

"Yo, bride boy!" Will snorts softly and turns his head to face the source of the familiar voice. Beverly stands close to the entrance still with her boyfriend Saul beside her, motioning for Will to come over with one hand while holding two small packages under the crook of her other arm.

"I guess I should go see what she wants."

"Abigail and I shall remain here to greet the rest of our guests as they arrive," says Hannibal, smiling agreeably as he takes Abigail's other hand in his own. After assuring their little girl that Daddy will be right back, Will steps aside to go greet Beverly on the other side of the room. Bev murmurs something to Saul before he reaches them and the other man nods before stepping away to pick out their seats.

“You rang?” Will asks dryly once he reaches her. He places his hands on his hips and says with just a slightly thicker drawl than normal, “And wearing *red* to my wedding, Ms. Katz? Have you no shame?”

“Shut up, it’s maroon and you know it,” she retorts in defense of her signature color.

“You know, I think this is the first time I’ve ever seen you in a dress,” he adds. Her hair is also swept up in an up-do that looks like it took some time to put together. The beaded white flowers pinned into it in an elegantly haphazard fashion are a nice touch, and he tells her so.

“Thanks, now come with me,” she says, tugging on his sleeve to pull him into a corridor off to the side. She sets the smaller box down on a credenza pressed against the wall and presents him with the other, a clear plastic one containing a boutonniere of tiny white flowers not unlike the fake ones studding her hair.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he says.

“It’s this or the bouquet I have stashed out in my car,” she tells him. “Take your pick, Mr. Lecter-to-be.”

Will pulls a face but otherwise remains still and lets her pin it to his jacket. Looking down, he notices the ribbon tying it all together is the faintest, almost unnoticeable shade of blue. When he comments on it, she delicately removes one of the beaded flowers from her own hair.

“Something borrowed *and* new,” she says and pins it neatly to the ribbon where it will be mostly hidden behind the real blooms.

“Where’s the something old then?” he asks.

She picks up the other box again. “My sister’s into jewelry crafting,” she explains. There’s a curious look of uncertainty on her face, as if she isn’t quite sure how the gift will be received. “I know it’s not the Newton’s Cradle I promised you forever ago but,” she shrugs, “this seemed more fitting under the circumstances.”

He opens the box, a little confused by what he’s seeing at first until her last statement clicks in his mind, and suddenly he finds himself nearly doubling over with laughter. Inside are the bullets he fired to take down Garret Jacob Hobbs almost three years ago, strung together on a delicate silver chain to comprise the world’s most macabre charm bracelet.

“I take it you like it then,” she says with a grin.

“It’s amazing. C’mere, you weirdo,” he says, reaching over to give her a one-armed hug, both of them careful not to crush the boutonniere between them. He lets her fasten it around his right wrist, still giggling silently to himself over the absurdity of it. It’s perfectly hidden by his sleeve when he shores his cuffs again.

“You ready?” she asks, offering the crook of her arm for him to take. With a roll of his eyes, he nods and accepts it.

Price and Zeller are both here and already seated a few feet down from Saul. So are Margot and Alana, the two of them seemingly dividing their attention between talking to his mate and cooing over their daughter, who are both now at the other end of the aisle closest to the front doors. For the first time, Will looks around the room and thinks about how odd it is that the people he and Hannibal are acquainted with most closely are all paired off in couples, wondering privately to himself how that happened when that certainly wasn't the case when he met all these people. Maybe some of his own good fortune has found a way to rub off on the rest of them somehow. That would be a nice change from what he's been used to for most of his life.

At least he won't need to be concerned with whether or not he's giving their guests enough attention during the reception—and *that* thought is a sure sign that his mate's mannerisms have started to rub off on him in more ways than one, he thinks with a wry smirk.

Bev nudges him in the ribs, nodding towards Alana and Margot who are both knelt down now in spite of the wrinkles they're sure to get in their nice outfits playing peek-a-boo with Abby. "Think those two are starting to get a case of baby fever?" she asks slyly.

"I'm sure a couple of weeks with a cranky, tantrum-throwing almost-toddler will cure them of that right quick," he responds. The two of them have heroically volunteered to look after not only Abigail, but all seven of their household's lovable strays and their two kittens, Ziggy and Stardust, while Hannibal and Will are abroad in Europe. "I don't have to worry about you catching that bug next, do I?"

"Nuh-uh," she answers firmly. "Always a babysitter, never a baby mama, that's my personal policy."

"That's probably a good plan. Fewer sleepless nights that way."

"As if you don't love it, *Mom,"* she teases. "You know you're not fooling anybody. There's already a betting pool in place for when you're gonna pop the next Lecter Junior out."

"What?!" Everyone in the chapel turns to look now, making Will flush with embarrassment. He turns his back on the room to face Bev directly so he doesn't have to see them. "I'll have you know, *Ms. Katz,"* he whispers, "that I'm on birth control now, so you're all going to be disappointed for quite a while."

"Oh, really? Interesting change from your old habits. Birth control is a lot easier to wean off from than suppressants," she replies, her tone gleeful as though Will's admission is a victory in her book rather than a monkey wrench in her plans.

"Beverly Katz, I'm going to kill you." She snorts, not in the least bit intimidated by his empty threat, and guides him without another word back into his mate's orbit.

"We're about to start now. I was beginning to wonder if I might have to hunt you down," Hannibal tells him mischievously. Will suppresses a shiver, knowing that to everyone else it must sound like his Alpha is joking, though the Omega knows better. He's not even shocked to realize that a tiny part of him now wishes he *had* run, not out of any real desire to escape,

but for the thrill of the chase and the sweet surrender to follow. *Save it for the honeymoon, dammit,* he schools his own hormones.

Music starts up softly in the background now, their guests seeming to take this as their cue to go to their seats. Panic nearly seizes Will then as he suddenly realizes he has no idea what he's supposed to be doing right now. People normally have rehearsals before a wedding, but if there was one Will wasn't a part of it. Does he just walk up to the front now? Is he expected to wait until Hannibal's gone ahead and follow after, or god forbid, follow after with an *escort?* Is that why Jack is coming towards them now? Jesus, they don't expect him to go along with being *given away* by his boss in lieu of his late father, do they? Wait, if that's the case then why is there a basket in the man's hands? What does any of this mean? *What the hell is going on…?*

"Breathe, *mylimasis,"* Hannibal whispers in his ear. Without thinking about it, Will does as told. It feels a little bit less like the room is spinning now as he slowly refills his lungs with deep measured breaths.

"Guess I'm a little more nervous about all this than I thought," he whispers back, chuckling under his breath. Hannibal smiles at him in return, wide enough that the gesture causes crinkling at the corner of his eyes, and somehow Will feels instantly more reassured for it.

"Not getting cold feet now, are we, my dear Will?"

Will meets Hannibal's gaze with his own, completely calm now, an edge of fierceness to his own smile that no one but his mate could possibly detect. "Never," he says.

When Jack reaches them Will sees that the basket in his hand is full of rose petals. He suppresses a giggle as his brain connects with what that means, and Hannibal relinquishes his hold on Abby's hand so Jack can take on the duty of patiently escorting her up the aisle himself, murmuring encouragement to her as they go to scatter the petals he holds out for her onto the floor.

She at least seems to grasp that she's supposed to drop them instead of just holding onto them, but mostly what happens is that she take huge fistfuls of them in both hands and dumps them all in one spot directly on the floor in front of her. Jack tries to show her how to do it a few times before eventually deciding to simply hold the basket out of her reach and hand her more acceptable amounts to drop little by little at a time. By this time most everyone is taking pictures and giggling with amusement at the scene.

The only reason Will holds a hand over his own mouth rather than laugh along with them is because he knows from experience that if Abby happens to hear and pick out her mother's voice above all the others, she's likely to stop what she's doing and try to run back over to him.

He does turn his head and murmur as quietly as he can to his mate, "Well, you certainly made this memorable, that's for sure. For as long as I live, I will never forget the day you somehow convinced Jack Crawford to be a flower girl."

Hannibal's lips twitch in that way Will knows means he's just barely holding back a laugh of his own. "He seems to be rather enjoying his duties, wouldn't you agree?" his Alpha responds, and it's true. Out of all the people clearly enjoying little Abigail's antics, none of them seem to be grinning as broadly as the man who has been granted the honor of walking alongside her at her own waddling pace. Will marvels silently at the fact that their little girl has practically everyone in this room wrapped around one of her tiny fingers already and she's not even two yet. Thunder stealer indeed.

"Shall we?" Hannibal asks once they've reached the end of the line and Jack has sat back down next to his wife with Abigail in his lap. He holds out the crook of his arm for Will to take.

Will slips his hand around his mate's arm, and together the two of them make their way up the aisle, the feel of plush carpet and crushed petals soft beneath their feet.

*

The ceremony itself is relatively short, as they generally are. There is a minor delay when Abigail starts fussing loudly, seeing her parents up on the dais in front of her and clearly wanting one of them to come pick her up. Will's heart breaks a little and he very nearly does step down when she starts wailing in spite of Jack's hushed assurances to her that everything's okay, but before he can take that first step Bella is already holding her own arms out and admonishing Jack to *'give her that baby right now.'*

Like magic, Abigail's wails turn into squeals of delight instead when the older woman starts bouncing her up and down and laying loud, smacking grandma kisses all over her face and even at the crook of her neck where it tickles. The pastor clears his throat, lips crooked upward in a smile of his own, and begins again. There are no more interruptions after that.

They exchange the usual vows, having decided to share personal ones only later with no one else around to hear. There are many things Will wants to say that are not meant for anyone else's ears.

His Alpha's eyes seem to blaze when they get to the line *'til death do us part,'* with a meaning Will easily interprets as, *'and not even then.'* His mate would never allow a tiny thing like death to keep the two of them apart. Their rings are exchanged next. The familiar weight of Will's own back on his finger is a comfortable and reassuring one after going all day without it, and now his mate wears one to match.

He's distracted enough by it that it's only distantly he hears the officiant say, "You may now kiss the bride," so he almost isn't prepared for it when Hannibal brushes gentle fingers over his smooth cheeks and tilts his head upwards.

His eyes slide shut at the feel of his Alpha's lips against his own. It's short and chaste compared to most of their kisses at home, but Will's thoughts are still dreamy and hazy when their lips finally part. Then he hears the snaps and shutters of people taking pictures on their phones—and in Price's case an honest-to-god *camera, what, who even buys those anymore*—and comes to the abrupt realization that it's done. They actually did it. Will and Hannibal are married now.

They stand up at the front for a little while longer to let everyone keep taking pictures for a bit. “By the way, was this everyone you invited?” he finally thinks to ask quietly when everyone else has finally finished taking so many damn photographs and begun to file out.

“Almost everyone. Aunt Murasaki sends her regrets. My uncle’s health is not what it once was and does not permit him to travel much anymore, and she was understandably reluctant to leave his side. I thought we might pay them a visit during our stay in Paris, however. They are anxious to meet you,” he says, turning his head to offer his Omega a soft smile. Will tries not to let his stomach clench too hard at the thought of finally getting to meet *the in-laws* and nods in return.

“There is one other person I invited, though I knew she would be unable to accept. Her duties keep her confined at home,” says Hannibal. Something in his tone on that last sentence has Will turning his head to look at him curiously. “Perhaps one day you will be able to meet her as well, when that eventually changes. I suspect you two would get along well, so long as you are both introduced under the right set of circumstances.”

“Well, that was sufficiently cryptic and vague. Not somebody I need to be jealous of, right?”

Hannibal chuckles under his breath. “I am almost tempted to say yes just to see what that would look like,” he admits. “Alas, nothing of the sort. Now is simply not the time to discuss it in detail. Another day,” he promises. Will has to accept that and lets it go for now.

The reception is at Will’s old house in Wolf Trap, more specifically the field right outside of it. The Omega is grateful his mate—and *husband* now—didn’t opt for something ostentatious and chose somewhere comfortable and familiar to Will instead. Though it is a bit disconcerting to learn there have apparently been catering staff filing in and out of his old kitchen all morning to set up. He wonders if they had a harder time in that small space with its lower amenities than they normally would in the Baltimore kitchen, helping with prep for his mate’s dinner parties. Some of the hors d'oeuvres are so obviously Hannibal-crafted though that he suspects the man must have prepared them in advance and drove out here to put them in the fridge for safekeeping until now.

The food is all laid out on a long table Will doesn’t recognize that must have been brought out for this purpose, but the centerpiece gives him pause—a crown of antlers draped with garlands of violet and asphodel, and more of the small purple and white flowers scattered all over the table.

The symbolism of it all isn’t lost on him. The flowers are common recurring images for love, death, rebirth, the taking of Persephone by Hades for his bride—and the antlers, *especially* being out in the middle of a field not unlike the one Cassie Boyle was found in all those years ago, can’t help but bring to Will’s mind the first courting gift his Alpha ever bestowed on him, long before he understood it for what it really was.

Sometimes it’s still a wonder to Will that Hannibal has remained uncaught all this time, with the way he likes to blatantly telegraph to the world who he is and what he’s done, but he knows that despite the morbidity of these decorative choices, it’s obvious only to himself and his mate and no one else what they mean. They understand one another as no one else can. For that reason, instead of a scoffing shake of his head or a chastising remark poised on his

tongue for later, Will turns to his mate with a soft, sincere smile and a kiss as he tells him, *"It's beautiful."*

The pleased smile Hannibal gives him in return is a toned-down version of the one he gives when he is especially enraptured with his mate, and it makes Will wish for a moment that they were alone so he could feel the full weight of it without distraction.

They spend some time eating and talking with everyone outside, slicing the cake and listening to whatever toasts Jack and some of the others decide to give, but all the while Will wishes for some excuse to steal away with Hannibal for a moment alone. Their wedding party is too small for that to go unnoticed. The universe, however, has had a funny way of late of actually giving Will what he wants instead of using him as its personal punching bag as it seemed to have done for most of his life previously.

It's about halfway through the meal that the dark clouds some of their guests have been muttering concernedly about overhead decide to open up at last and pour the heavens down upon them. Suddenly there are loud surprised squeals and lots of shouting as guests and waitstaff hurry inside the house, rushing to cover up as many of the dishes as possible and bring them inside with them. Will sees Beverly scoop Abby up in her arms, Saul holding his jacket out over both of their heads without concern for how much his own shirt gets soaked in the process, and feels gratitude for them both as they rush for the shelter of the house ahead of the crowd.

He stands there, eyes closed, laughing giddily with palms and face turned upward. If he's being perfectly honest, he's always loved the rain.

He opens his eyes again to find Hannibal standing right before him, that smile on his face again in full force now. He steps closer. "Alone at last, *mylimasis,"* he says.

"I was just thinking the same thing. This couldn't have gone more perfectly than if you planned it," Will agrees, still giggling.

"Who says I didn't?" Hannibal asks, pulling Will closer with his arms around his waist.

"You may be capable of many things, Doctor Lecter," says Will, winding his arms around his Alpha's shoulders. The others are most likely watching from the windows wondering if the two of them have lost their minds, standing outside in the middle of a rainstorm letting their expensive dry clean-only suits get thoroughly ruined, but neither of them cares. "But I don't think you get credit for making it rain."

"I shall endeavor to earn my credit in other ways then, Mr. Lecter," Hannibal promises, then seals his lips over Will's in a kiss that makes the younger man's toes curl.

The two of them remain like that for as long as it takes for the downpour to dwindle down into a mere drizzle, trading their secret, personal vows with no one else to listen except for the wind and the rain, which sweep them up and scatter them somewhere no other ears can reach.

Chapter End Notes

mano saldus vasaros vaikas = "my sweet summer child." Because the author is still dying of laughter over that "mic drop" line in s3 to this very day. Hannibal trying to keep up with the cool kids' lingo and memes is the best headcanon ever, thank you very much for this magical gift that keeps on giving, Mr. Fuller. xD

The author maaaaay have also been cribbing a line from Pride & Prejudice when Will tells Hannibal he can't take credit for making it rain. ;)

Valentine's Day

Chapter Notes

> Here's a super short Valentine's Day flash fic I just wrote on the fly. I'd say it qualifies for both IaBlMeanie's request for a holiday update and part of tfbl's request to see Will and each of the kids' first murders...it has Will's first kill that doesn't count as self-defense or defense of another at any rate. The other firsts will have to come later. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first time they kill together is on Valentine's Day, less than two months shy of when they will be exchanging their 'I dos.' The timing of it is more of a happy coincidence than anything else, chosen partly because it would be the first baby-free night they've had in awhile. Bev had happily offered to take Abby for the day without even being asked, explaining with a saucy wink that *somebody* ought to be getting lucky that night at least—Saul would be pulling back-to-back shifts at work, the price of working for an upscale restaurant on one of its busiest nights of the year.

"It's cool anyway. We're both totally calling in sick later this week to make up for the lost time. Just don't tell you-know-who," she'd said, meaning Jack.

"I don't get why you think Voldemort would have any interest in your sex life," Will had joked, not sure *why* that had earned a gaping fish-mouthed look from his best friend. Unlike his mate, Will does have literary interests that fall outside of Dostoyevsky and Dante's jurisdictions, thank you very much. "But sure, no problem. And thank you."

"Don't mention it. You can tell me all the glorious details when we get back to work on Monday," she'd said, waggling her eyebrows.

"Not a chance." Will doubts highly that his friend would appreciate knowing just how her offer is going to be put to use, but he's certainly more than a little excited about it.

It's funny, he would have expected to be more apprehensive and uncertain, rather than looking *forward* so much to the idea of premediated murder, but since he's come to accept who Hannibal is—and what that means about who *Will himself* is too—he's been eager for the right opportunity to come along to take this next giant step, the one that to his mind says more about the solidity of their relationship and commitment to one another than their nuptials ever will.

And he's *positive* that Hannibal is even more thrilled than he is, all but giddy with anticipation for the past month since Will named their target, a wife beater who keeps getting out on bail and going back home no matter how many times his spouse calls the cops or tries

to leave, and told his Alpha with a coy smile to wait for a night when they would have the house to themselves.

Tonight when they get home will not be the first time they have cooked dinner together, but it will be the first meal Will has helped butcher, the first night he will slice into a flank of meat that was brought to their table by *his* hand, and he revels in the knowledge of that more than he thought he would.

He can't think of a more romantic way to spend an evening with his fiancé.

*

Nothing like running through the woods to get away from a goddamn psychopath intent on slicing you up to get your blood pumping and make you reconsider your life choices.

James Clarke, age 32, Alpha male. On the run for his life about a quarter-mile from where his car broke down on the side of the road after he realized the other Alpha parked a couple of yards back from his vehicle was *not* there to offer his assistance. He's been stumbling half-blind through the dark ever since, frantically searching for somewhere to hide or a way out of the woods. Every time he thinks he's shaken off his pursuer though, he spots him again out of the corner of his eye somewhere else he doesn't expect, and even twice directly ahead of him a little ways off, like the guy's Jason fucking Voorhees or something.

Poor James. If it were a little less dark, or he were a little less panicked and more observant, he might notice the mysterious "figure" chasing him down keeps changing body types back and forth, and realize he's being hunted by not one man, but two.

He's lost the bastard for the moment at least, he thinks, and presses his back against the nearest tree trunk to catch his breath.

If he gets out of this, he'll show up at Mona's with a huge bouquet of roses and beg her to take him back and give him one last chance. Tell her he's sorry for the black eye, sorry for the bruises before that, sorry for always saying he's sorry and not meaning it, or only meaning it for a little while, he promises he'll mean it for good this time, *sorry, sorry, sorry...*

A twig snaps from somewhere nearby, and he springs up straighter, muscles frozen in fight-or-flight mode with no sense of which direction to go.

"You lost or something?" a voice asks, and he spins around to face its owner who's much closer than he thought, close enough that he can make out the shorter, slighter frame now, and sniff out with a deep, shaky inhale Omegan pheromones instead of Alpha ones. He relaxes immediately and puts a finger to his lips, telling the newcomer quietly to shush.

"There's this fucking crazy guy out here somewhere," he whispers, head twisted around as though terrified he'll be snuck up on from behind. *"I think I finally lost him though."*

"You sure about that?" The voice is suddenly *much* closer than it was a second ago. He lets out a high, wheezing gasp, more startled than anything else, as something cold and sharp pierces through his stomach before he's fully turned back to look. The pain comes vividly

moments later, as the knife tears harshly through the rest of his torso, spilling his guts out onto the forest floor in the process.

Clarke falls, twitching and convulsing as he bleeds out. Hannibal steps out from where he has been hiding in plain sight for several minutes, content to watch and see how his mate would do on their first outing together.

“His fear will give the meat a bitter after-flavor,” he points out calmly, although he couldn’t be happier with how this turned out and smiles proudly as he tells Will so.

“Yeah, well whose fault is that?” Will asks cheekily, ignoring the compliment. “At least I got the pig to calm down a bit right before the slaughter.”

“So you did,” his Alpha concedes, lifting one of Will’s bloodied hands to his lips to get a taste.

Will takes Hannibal’s face between both hands now, pleased when the man lets him without a fuss. He stares, enraptured by how the blood looks against his Alpha’s skin under the moonlight, pupils blown, and pulls him down for a kiss that is much rougher and deeper than he meant it to be, drawing satisfied, near-animalistic growls from them both.

“Happy Valentine’s Day, Hannibal,” he says with a savage, blood-smeared grin against the Alpha’s lips. The older man’s grip around his waist tightens, pulling him impossibly closer until there is no space left between them.

“Happy Valentine’s Day, my darling, messy boy,” he breathes, and bites down lightly when he sucks his Omega’s bottom lip back into his mouth for yet another kiss.

Chapter End Notes

> Sidebar, could this technically also be considered a submission for International Fanworks Day with that really brief reference to Will reading Harry Potter? Just curious really. I don't think I'll actually tag it as such either way since it's posted as part of a larger fic. :P

New Births

Chapter Notes

> Commenter FFFFFFUUUUUUUUUUUCK requests: *"Will going into labor with his second child and cursing up a storm???? Like a moment were Will just looks so absolutely fucking terrifying because he's pissed that Hannibal is like (0__0) imma just kinda...inch out the room for a bit..."*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Having a second child had been Will's idea.

It happened one day when he came home from an afternoon of fishing and was putting his supplies back up in the attic—such items with all their sharp hooks and thin, cutting wires were not things to be kept downstairs anymore with both a rambunctious preschooler and two cats that liked to climb up onto *everything* running around the house. He had turned, prepared to climb back down the ladder, when something, perhaps no more than a mote of dust in the sunlight, drew his eye across the room to Abby's old crib, stored away after they had moved it out of her room and replaced it with a child's size canopy bed.

Will ran his hand wistfully over the smooth, sleek wooden frame and had the thought then, quite suddenly but with a determined resolve that had not wavered by the time Hannibal and Abby returned home. He accepted a distracted kiss in greeting from his husband while stirring himself a cup of tea in the kitchen, then casually held up the used bag by its string and asked the Alpha to throw it away for him.

He quietly blew over the rim of his cup, not saying anything more as the man lifted the lid and stared down at the packet of birth control pills settled neatly on top of the rest of the trash. He waited then until the other man looked up again to peer up at him through his lashes, an innocent smile on his face, and remind him that his next heat was only a few weeks away.

They might have also gotten some practice in later that night as well. Purely for rehearsal reasons, of course.

Ned Robertus was born about eleven months later. Doctor Farber remarked vaguely that it was one of the shortest and easiest deliveries she'd ever presided over, and Ned himself the most remarkably quiet and unfussy baby she'd ever delivered.

Will will look back on this several years from now and joke to his mate that perhaps there is some correlation between their younger children's births and their corresponding personalities. Hannibal's faint smile in return is closer almost to a nervous grimace as he recalls the exact circumstances of their younger daughter's birth.

*

"Hannibal, I swear to god," Will grits out between his teeth, crushing his mate's hand with his own so tightly the Alpha is certain to find mottled bruises all over it later, "if you say I'm 'doing well' or that it's just for 'a little longer' one more time, I will slice you open from groin to navel, pull out your innards, and *show you* exactly what this feels like."

Hannibal's face goes completely blank. Will would smirk victoriously at it if he wasn't in so much pain. The sun is just starting to set in their view through the window outside. It had been high in the sky when they first arrived at the hospital.

"I swear I'll kill you for this," Will mutters darkly. Hannibal spares a sharp glance for Doctor Farber and the nurse working alongside her, but neither of them appear fazed by anything his mate has been saying. They are entirely too used to Omegas throwing death threats at their spouses to take any of it seriously. They are blissfully unaware, of course, that here in their care lies an Omega only too capable to carry those threats out should he so choose.

Will throws his head back, groaning, "Why am I doing this? Why did I *agree* to another damn kid?"

Hannibal has several replies prepared on the tip of his tongue. He could remind Will what a blessing their small, growing family is, how wonderful it will be to have a baby in the house again when they least expected it. Ned is seven now, Abigail twelve and about to enter middle school.

He could point out that Will had hardly *agreed* to anything, as that would imply it had been Hannibal's idea to have a third child, when in fact it had been a happy accident born out of Will's carefree attitude upon realizing he had neglected to pack his birth control with the rest of his luggage on their last trip abroad. Unless Will is admitting now to it being an unconscious, yet nonetheless intentional, decision rather than simply forgetful negligence, which he supposes in his mate's case is a distinct possibility.

He could mention all these things, but he won't, Hannibal decides. His instincts for self-preservation are far too great for that.

And when Isabella Phyllis decides to finally make her appearance in the world at last, red-faced and squalling, Hannibal decides it is more than worth it to endure a little numbness in his squeezed hand and some colorful swearing from the beautiful man in the bed, now panting heavily as they both watch the nurse clean her up so she can be held.

Chapter End Notes

Changed this up a bit obviously. I tried to write it with Hannibal leaving the room as per the original request, but quickly realized that nope, if Hanni actually did that Will really *would* make good on his threats. xD

Babies' First Murders

Chapter Notes

> As you may have seen from the updated summary and tags, this is the last prompt fic I will be posting (besides the two I have queued up for my other flash fics collection). I'm not accepting more at this time, but I may write some more stories for both collections eventually in the future, we'll see.
>
> And now without further ado, the second half of tfbl's prompt for first murders. ^_~ ~~Hehehe, I'm going straight to hell in a handbasket for this one.~~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They say younger siblings tend to learn and develop more quickly than older ones, especially in a healthy and loving family environment. Having the encouragement and support of elder siblings as well as parents can go a long way toward stimulating young minds and sparking creativity at an early age. So it is with many families, the Lecters being no exception.

*

For many sixteen-year-olds, particularly those from wealthy families, getting one's first car is a significant rite of passage. For young Abigail Mischa, that excitement pales to the one of finally getting to join her parents on a hunt for the first time.

Their target of the evening is a racist judge with a nasty habit of convicting defendants of color even in cases woefully lacking in evidence and consistently giving them harsher sentences and longer prison terms than their white counterparts. Will learns through a few acquaintances at the Baltimore courthouse when the man is scheduled to leave for a camping trip, and then they wait.

The Honorable Jim Sandersen will not be missed for over a week, when he fails to report in on the day of his return and his car is found parked along the side of the road on the way to his favorite campsite. A few days later, the search party will find little more than a long abandoned tent and a few bloody shreds of clothing which seem to indicate an attack by a wild animal. After a bit of time, the city officials will stop looking altogether.

No one would ever suspect that the man is in fact still very much alive by this point, and would continue to be so over the course of several weeks. Abigail enjoys going down into the basement after she's finished with her homework every afternoon, examining how the judge's wounds have been healing with a critical eye and inflicting new ones with a terrifying surgical precision and clinical bedside manner taught to her by her father since she was old enough to understand the use for such unique talents. It reminds Hannibal of his own early

experiments, testing the limits of the human anatomy late into the night alongside his other, more orthodox studies in medicine.

“Death by a thousand cuts,” she says with a playful smirk and a wink as she makes her very first incision, her papa looking on from across the room and wearing a proud smile as the man begins screaming.

*

Ned is a bit younger, only thirteen when he asks if he can try something with the next pig his parents bring home. He has been reading up on his mother’s books and old case files almost as avidly as his favorite poets and science fiction authors, and thinks he can improve upon the design of one of those killers his parents encountered in the early days of their courtship.

“It’s natural that in our formative years, we seek to imitate the art of those who came before us,” Hannibal says to Will privately in their study later when they are discussing their son’s unexpected request. “In hopes that by attaining mastery over another’s work, we find within ourselves the creative kernel of our own design.”

“Sort of like *Il Mostro* taking his inspiration from *La Primavera,”* Will points out knowingly.

“Quite so,” his mate agrees.

After a bit of planning and discussing what Ned will need to prepare, Hannibal brings home a new victim, unconscious but still breathing, and ties him up before backing away to watch quietly from the corner with Will as their son begins his work, Abby and Isabella busy playing with the dogs outside.

The boy opens the man’s veins without bothering to wake him up first, cutting the vital arteries that will bleed him out the fastest with a dispassionate gaze. The real work is in cutting him open and carefully unspooling his intestines.

Tobias Budge, he explains to his attentive audience, had an intriguing idea that he nonetheless didn’t implement well. The job was too rushed, more about showing off what he could do than about making a good working instrument. The guts need time to soak and be treated properly and the body must be hollowed out and cleaned.

A private concert for four is held once it’s finished, a beautiful and unearthly melody that brings tears to Hannibal and Will’s eyes and that Abigail insists they record onto a CD. Little Izzy can barely contain her own delight, asking excitedly when it will be her turn to try the family hobby.

“When you’re a little older, baby,” Will promises.

“What was it like? *What was it like??”* she asks her brother. Ned shrugs.

“It was okay. Honestly the music is more interesting to me than the murder.”

“Well, you are exceptionally talented at both, hon,” Will says, ruffling the beta’s hair and kissing him affectionately on the crown of his head.

“Perhaps on butchering days we should start keeping the intestines for you to process from now on, instead of returning to the shop to buy strings,” Hannibal suggests.

Izzy crosses her arms over her chest and huffs. “No one even lets me downstairs on butchering day, but I wanna *watch!”* the little girl pouts.

“Tell you what then, *širdelė,”* her father says, crouching down to be on eye level with her. “If you promise to be very good and sit still and not touch anything, perhaps Daddy will let up on his rule of no one under the age of ten being permitted into the basement.”

“Oh sure, put that all on me,” says Will sardonically. He sighs as the little girl turns to him with big puppy dog eyes, practically bouncing on her tippy toes.

“Oh please, Daddy, please please *please please?”*

“Say the magic word,” Abigail stage-whispers to her little sister from her seat on the couch. Will tilts his head to mock-glare at her.

“Please, Mama!” the girl changes tack obediently. “Can I, Mama, *please?”*

“Alright, *fine,”* Will grouses, throwing his hands in the air in surrender. “Since this whole family’s decided to gang up on me about it,” he adds with a pointed look at his husband. The Alpha’s expression is one of serene innocence.

“There’s some guts left over in the vat I’m gonna use to string the cello with later,” Ned tells the kindergartener. “Wanna see?” She nods and the two of them take off for the basement door.

“Don’t let her touch anything sharp!” Will calls after them in his strictest mom voice. He drops down on the couch next to his eldest with an exasperated sigh. After a moment he chuckles and turns his head. “You were born into the real-life Addams family, you know that, Abby?”

“I wouldn’t change it for anything in the world, Daddy,” she says, leaning over to plant a kiss on his brow.

“Hmm, sucking up now, are we? What is it you want?”

She bites her lip to hold back a mischievous grin. “Can I go to Nicki’s party on Saturday? It’s supposed to be a pre-graduation celebration for all the seniors.”

“Will there be alcohol?” Will asks.

“I sure hope so or it’ll *really* suck,” says Abigail. Will looks over to his mate in clear invitation for him to step in.

Hannibal plucks one string of their son’s new instrument admiringly before turning his attention to Abby. “Be home by no later than 2 AM,” he says. “And do not accept a ride from anyone you suspect of being under the influence. Call your mother or I so one of us can pick you up if that’s the case.”

She thanks them both and scampers off to join her younger siblings. Hannibal moves to take her place on the sofa beside his Omega.

Will shuts his eyes and breathes deeply. “Graduation,” he says wryly. “Then off to college with her.”

“At least it’ll be another twelve years at the minimum before we are left with an empty nest,” Hannibal consoles. “Unless, of course, you are thinking of having another to keep that time at bay just a little longer.”

“Don’t *even* joke about that,” Will grumbles. “I swear my uterus is still bruised from the last one.” As if on cue, they hear Izzy start laughing raucously at something from the direction of the kitchen, something they shouldn’t be able to hear from the basement. *“Hey guys, what have I said about keeping that trap door shut?”* Will yells without getting up. *“The cats can get down there and hurt themselves!”* Rapid echoing footsteps and the sound of a door slamming later, and the house is silent again. Will rubs his eyes tiredly.

Hannibal draws him closer with an arm around his shoulders. “Perhaps you are right,” he says. “Three children is quite enough.” Will chuckles and snuggles in closer, half-ready for a nap himself like the tabby currently curled up on the ottoman, not in the least perturbed by all the noise from earlier. He understands completely now what people mean when they say that parenthood is a full-time job, though as his daughter said, it’s one he wouldn’t give up for the world.

*

It is only a few short years later that Will must make good on his promise, just a few weeks shy of Izzy’s tenth birthday. It’s just the two of them together on a foggy, overcast day, taking the dogs out to play at a shady, secluded park. They have only three now—Winston, who is getting quite on in his years and slower than he used to be, and two younger ones they rescued over the last few years. No one else is out here at this time of day, the weather keeping people indoors for the most part, which is exactly how Will likes it.

At least, no one else is *supposed* to be out here. He pretends not to notice the man at the treeline watching him and his daughter play fetch with the dogs. A man he has seen multiple times around the local parks lately, always alone, always watching the children at play just a little too attentively. Wearing a scent blocker too, or the dogs would have sniffed him out by now. *He must think today is his lucky day.*

Izzy giggles as Felix successfully tugs the stick out of her hand and runs off with it. Still smiling, her eyes dart once to the trees before she looks away again. “Daddy?” she questions.

“Yeah, I see him, baby,” Will says softly under his breath, glowing with pride inside even in the midst of his hypervigilance that she not only noticed their observer as well, but kept her cool about it without giving that fact away. *God, they learn so fast,* he thinks to himself. A plan of action begins to coalesce and take shape in his thoughts.

Smiling slowly, he asks, “Think you’re ready for the big leagues, sweetheart?”

The surprised, ecstatic smile on his child's face and adorable way she holds herself back from jumping up and down excitedly is all the answer he needs.

*

"Sweetie, I think you threw the ball too far. The dogs didn't see it," the Omega calls out.

"It's okay, I'll get it!" yells the pretty little girl with the sandy blonde hair, already running in the direction of the woods where he is waiting, unbeknownst to them both.

He waits until she has ventured far and deep enough into the woods to be well out of sight of her mother before stepping out.

"Oh!" she spins around, startled. "Hello there. Did you see a ball go flying by here?"

"I did," he lies. "It went by that way," he says, pointing deeper into the trees. "Want me to help you look for it?"

"Sure! But first," she says, looking around as if to make sure her mother isn't nearby, the picture of mischievous innocence. *"Can you keep a secret?"* she whispers loudly. Smiling indulgently, he nods and crouches down when she waves for him to come closer.

He is too shocked even to think of going for the knife in his boot when her teeth latch into his throat and *rip*.

Izzy steps back, panting with excitement as the man gurgles and writhes on the ground. "Daddy, I did it, I did it!"

"I see that. You did great, baby. Just like we talked about," Will says, stepping out from where he had been hiding for most of the exchange, having snuck over quietly after tying the dogs to a nearby oak. He smiles wistfully at the girl looking up at him with big doe eyes and blood dripping down her chin. "I almost wish I could take a picture and send it to your father."

"Dad," she says embarrassedly, and wipes at her face with her already soiled shirt. Will unzips the go-bag he brought with them and wets a washcloth with a water bottle before handing it to her.

"Now go change your shirt," he says once her face is cleaned up, pointing to a fresh one in the bag as he bends down to tourniquet the wound in the now unconscious man's neck to keep him from bleeding out entirely. A swift death would be far too kind for this one. "When you get back, I'll show you the easiest way to get him into the trunk mess-free."

As she skips off deeper into the woods to change, he looks back down at the would-be kidnapper with a grim smile and a steely glint in his eye.

"You picked the wrong family to fuck with, asshole."

Chapter End Notes

The Lecter family, a wholesome household of sadistic vigilantes and literal social justice warriors. :D

End Notes

Author gives series a dramatic sounding name because Psalm 130 is his favorite. Heh, and now you know the reference if you hadn't guessed it before. ;)

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